

Liability Fund Ignored Collateral Damage In Places Like Sarasota, Manatee

Washington, D.C. -- U.S. Rep. Vern Buchanan (FL-13) has called on President Obama's Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling to examine the impact of the oil spill on Southwest Florida.

"The Commission needs to examine, as a component of their assessment, the significant financial damage that has been caused to districts like mine that were not physically hit by oil, yet are still suffering economically," said Buchanan in testimony to the Commission, which hosted a hearing on the causes of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in Washington, D.C. this week.

Despite the fact that oil did not make landfall in Florida's 13th Congressional District, a study by travel research group YPartnership reported a 22 percent drop in tourism in July and August for two of the largest cities in the district.

"Unfortunately, because oil didn't reach our area, our businesses have little to no chance of receiving compensation from BP's oil spill liability funds," said the Congressman. "The review process that decides which businesses are eligible for compensation from the liability fund is flawed, ignoring collateral damage in places like Sarasota and Manatee counties. The federal government needs to do a better job of assessing this type of collateral damage so that assistance efforts can be targeted more fairly."

"As a coastal district, the business makeup of the Florida-13th relies very heavily on tourism and coast-related industries," said Buchanan. "The environmental damage caused by the oil spill will linger for decades and affect businesses that depend on the Gulf's natural resources that have surely been impacted by the oil and the dispersants that were used to break it down."

"The people I represent deserve answers as to why this happened, and they deserve assurance from their government that this won't happen again," added Buchanan.

Rep. Buchanan introduced the Oil Spill Prevention Act, H.R. 5572, earlier this year to combat lax oil industry safety and environmental standards.

The National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling was established and appointed by President Obama in May, and has been given the task of examining the causes of and response to the oil spill, the impacts of the oil spill, and recommendations for restoration.